



**For Immediate Release**

Easton, MD – April 13, 2022

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**Talbot County Council Meeting Highlights, Tuesday, April 12, 2022**

*These highlights only reflect the business items covered from the Council's approved agenda. To view the complete County Council meeting, please visit: Talbot County Meeting Videos - Talbot County, Maryland ([www.talbotcountymd.gov](http://www.talbotcountymd.gov)).*

**I. Proclamation:** Proclamation: Maryland Flood Awareness Month – April 2022

The Council voted to recognize Flood Awareness Month in Maryland – April 2022. Greg Allis, Zoning and Floodplain Coordinator for Talbot County presented information on the “Maryland Flood Awareness – Know, Plan, Act” plan. The Plan encourages communities in Talbot County to observe this month with appropriate programs, outreach, and activities to raise awareness among Talbot County residents and visitors to KNOW the risk, MAKE a plan, and be ready to ACT on the plan for hurricanes and intense storms in this coming season. Mr. Allis also explained precautions for residents to take, including flood insurance for their properties. He stated, “I would like to thank the Talbot County Council for approving this proclamation and all of their support, along with the Department of Emergency Services, for keeping the County informed and prepared for flood hazards.”

Council member Frank Divilio stated, “I really appreciate all the hard work that you do. I remember being a kid on Black Dog Alley when it would flood all the time. And just recently Mr. Edwards made Black Dog alley one of the best roads in Talbot County . . . The flooding that we have can be detrimental when we're sending out an ambulance and I greatly appreciate everybody working together to make this big improvement.”

**II. Presentation of Priority Listing to Maryland Department of Transportation** – Ray Clarke, County Engineer; Mike Mertaugh, Roads Engineer; and Warren Edwards, Roads Superintendent

presented the “Talbot County Project Priority Listing for the Consolidated Transportation Program 2022.”

#### 1) MD Route 322/US 50 Intersection – North

This intersection includes cross-traffic vehicle maneuvers between two high volume, high-speed roadways, and the merging of a vehicle in the fast lane of traffic in the eastbound lane of US Route 50. In the past couple of years, there has consistently been and continues to be, a significant number of personal injury and property damage crashes including an unacceptable number of fatalities. Consistent with the Maryland Strategic Highway Safety Plan the highway infrastructure at this location should be evaluated and improved as soon as possible in an effort to rectify this public infrastructure deficiency.

#### 2) MD Route 33 Capacity and Evacuation Improvements

During weather-related emergencies such as Tropical Storm Isabel and Hurricane Irene, this corridor experienced areas of significant flooding, limiting ingress and egress from this portion of the county. The MD Route 33 corridor is the sole evacuation route for this populated neck or peninsula. Accordingly, elevation modification to eliminate or minimize storm surge road flooding, as well as capacity improvements, should be pursued to protect the lives and safety of citizens in this area. Also, portions of this corridor between the Town of St. Michaels and the Town of Easton experience some weekday capacity issues which are anticipated to increase in the future. Traffic counts show that portions of MD Route 33 have heavy traffic volume, particularly near its intersection with MD Route 322. As an interim measure, the MD Route 33 corridor should be evaluated for any issues or problems that would need to be resolved in future improvements.

#### 3) Traffic crossing Route 50

##### A. US Route 50/MD Route 328 – Goldsborough Street Intersection Improvements

This intersection currently experiences significant traffic volumes for all approaches. The geometric configuration of this intersection possesses many shortcomings on Goldsborough Street, west of US Route 50. The State should work with the Town of Easton to improve the geometric configuration of this intersection approach and/or provide technical assistance to the Town for diversion of east-west traffic from this intersection.

##### B. MD Route 50/MD Route 331 – Dover Street Intersection Improvements

This intersection currently experiences significant traffic volumes for all approaches. The geometric configuration of this intersection possesses many shortcomings on Dover Street, west of US Route 50. The State should work with the Town of Easton to improve the geometric configuration of this intersection approach and/or provide technical assistance to the Town for diversion of east-west traffic from this intersection.

##### C. US Route 50/Chapel Road - Intersection Improvements

This intersection currently experiences significant traffic volumes for all approaches. The geometric configuration of this intersection possesses many shortcomings on Chapel Road, west of US Route 50. The State should work with the Town of Easton to improve the geometric configuration of this

intersection approach and/or provide technical assistance to the Town for diversion of east-west traffic from this intersection. An overpass should be planned as a long-term solution for Priority Rankings 3-A through 3-C.

#### 4) US Route 50/MD Route 309/MD Route 662 Intersection Capacity Improvements

As a result of increasing traffic for the growing Easton Airport, Talbot County Community Center and the likely relocation of the Easton Memorial Hospital to Longwoods Road (MD Route 662), one of our top priorities would be the construction of an overpass that meets FAA requirements and serves these facilities. Airport Road, west of this intersection, has become a significant “bypass” route around Easton to and from the Bay Hundred peninsula (St. Michaels area), in addition to the aforementioned growth. Talbot County is in the process of pursuing reconstruction of this roadway. This County facility ties into the MD 662/US Route 50 intersections, which currently possess poor intersection spacing/geometry. In the short term, analysis, design, and reconstruction of this area should be pursued to facilitate capacity and safe flow of vehicles through these intersections and to/from the County road.

#### 5) MD Route 329 (Royal Oak Road) Safety Improvements

This roadway serves as the primary means of ingress and egress for the communities in and around the villages of Royal Oak and Bellevue, in addition to a significant tourism corridor for these communities and beyond. Paralleling MD Route 33, this roadway provides an alternative route for MD Route 33 (see priority number 1 above, evacuation corridor). The importance of this alternative route is compounded considering the aging status of the bridge carrying MD Route 33 over Oak Creek.

#### 6) Easton Airport - Runway Safety Improvements

Easton Airport is continuing to work towards improving the Runway Safety Area (RSA) of the primary Runway 4/22 and shifting the runway 1,900 ft. southwest of the current location. This safety improvement will bring the runway into full compliance with FAA design standards. This is critical for the long-term financial sustainability of the airport and the economic benefits derived by the County. The airport has completed the two phases of Obstruction Removal, successfully bringing many adjacent properties into compliance with State & Federal airspace regulations and clearing more than 22 acres of trees to prepare for the future runway safety area.

Classified as a “National” general aviation airport by the FAA, Easton Airport supports the national and state system by providing communities with access to national and international markets in multiple states and throughout the country.

Easton Airport will delay seeking grant funding for Phase 3 of the Obstruction Removal Program until FY2024 (Project total cost of \$500,000).

Council President Chuck Callahan stated, “We need to get the State Highway Administration to pay attention to all these additional Route 50 crossings . . . We all know what State Highway’s focus is always going to be and it's not going to be these projects. We know that because we've been sitting here for over 12 years with these issues.”

Council discussion ensued about each of the projects as well as thru traffic on Route 50 from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge to the beach. The Council requested Ray Clarke obtain further information on the Town of Easton and Dorchester County's highway priorities and report back to the Council. The Council will revisit the priority list at the next Council meeting on April 26, 2022, before submitting it to the Maryland Department of Transportation in May 2022.

### **III. Introduction of Administrative Resolution:**

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY (THE "COUNTY COUNCIL"), PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY OF BILL NO. 1494 ENACTED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON NOVEMBER 9, 2021 (THE "PUBLIC LOCAL LAW"), AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A MASTER LEASE AGREEMENT, EQUIPMENT SCHEDULE NO. 001, AND RELATED INSTRUMENTS BETWEEN TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND, AS LESSEE, AND SIGNATURE PUBLIC FUNDING CORP., AS LESSOR, FOR THE PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE COUNTY'S REPURPOSING CENTER LOCATED AT 28128 ST. MICHAELS ROAD, EASTON, MARYLAND

Warren Edwards, Roads Superintendent, stated "I appreciate everyone's support in making this project work."

Upon motion by Mr. Pack, seconded by Ms. Price, the Council voted unanimously to approve the Administrative Resolution to execute the master lease agreement for equipment at the Repurposing Center.

### **IV. Public Hearings:**

#### Numbered Resolutions:

The public hearings on Resolutions 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, and 328 which all involve amendments to the Talbot County Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan will be continued until Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> in order to allow for the Talbot County Planning Commission to meet on April 20<sup>th</sup>, review the numbered resolutions and provide their recommendations. These resolutions are designed to provide environmental mitigation efforts to stabilize the sewer infrastructure and to add additional connections to the source system, therefore alleviating failing septic systems in Talbot County.

Resolution No. 329, A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS FOR LARGE-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS BEYOND THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION STAGE FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) MONTHS PENDING CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF SUCH LEGISLATION AS THE COUNTY COUNCIL MAY CONSIDER ADVISABLE TO PROMOTE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE. The public hearing on Resolution No. 329 will be continued to Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> in order to allow for the Talbot County Planning Commission to meet on April 20<sup>th</sup>, review the numbered resolution and provide their recommendation.

A public hearing was held on Bill No. 1497, A BILL TO AMEND CHAPTER 24 (BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS) OF THE TALBOT COUNTY CODE IN ORDER TO ADD A NEW ARTICLE V ENTITLED "POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGING COMMITTEE."

Written comments on Bill No. 1497 will be accepted through Thursday, April 14, 2022. Bill No. 1497 will be eligible for vote on April 26, 2022.

**V. County Manager's Report:** County Manager Clay Stamp presented the following report:

1) Board and Committee Appointments:

Board of Electrical Examiners – The Council voted unanimously to approve the reappointment of Tim Fluharty to the Board of Electrical Examiners.

Commission on Aging – The Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Grace Lyons, Community Relations Director for Candlelight Cove Assisted Living, to the Commission on Aging.

Emergency Services Advisory Board – The Council voted unanimously to approve the reappointment of Debbie Timms (Shore Regional Health), Steve Mroczek (Talbot County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association), and Major Scott Mergenthaler (Sheriff's Office) to the Emergency Services Advisory Board.

- 2) The Council voted unanimously to approve a request from the Department of Public Works to submit a grant application to the Maryland Energy Administration's Clean Fuels Incentive Program for the purchase of two to four new pickup trucks and propane conversion kits for the Sanitary District as was done five years ago.
- 3) The Council voted unanimously to provide letters of support to Senators Cardin and Van Hollen for Building African American Minds, Inc.'s (BAAM's) Application for Congressionally Directed Spending Funds for the construction of their Academic Center. No County funds are required.
- 4) The Council voted 4 – 1 (Council Vice President Leshner voted against) in favor of drafting a letter of support, with additional language to be drafted by Mr. Thomas, for the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial Bridge (Chesapeake Bay Bridge) Construction. The language to be added will clarify "an additional bridge or a replacement bridge at the current location, whatever the State deems appropriate" as well as additional language regarding thru traffic flow along the Route 50 corridor from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge to the beaches. Mr. Thomas was requested to draft edits to the letter and have the Council review it again on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Leshner commented, "We need to get the state's attention about how they are going to address the impacts in Talbot County. There's no plan to address these impacts. We need to wait on this and perhaps take a little bit of public comment on this issue."

- 5) Council unanimously approved the motion to award the Department of Corrections Bid No. 22-02, INTEGRATED VIDEO/RECORDING SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – TALBOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND to ARK in the amount of \$330,736 as well as approval to negotiate a best and final offer with ARK to break the project into two fiscal years (FY22 and FY23).

Terry Kokolis, Director of Corrections, commented, “It not only upgrades what exists and really improves the overall security of the housing units, the common areas, and the security area.”

“The new system will be a digital system that also incorporates WiFi. There is no WiFi in the jail. WiFi is essential because it will permit us to use a great deal of technology that improves the overall outlook of the inmates. It provides tablets for education programs, substance abuse programs, and numerous other programs.

- 6) The Council voted unanimously to approve the following requests for the Department of Corrections:

Request from the Department of Corrections to extend the current agreement with Wellpath (formerly Correct Care Solutions, LLC) to provide inmate medical and mental health services for FY23 at a cost of \$467,128.15. There are sufficient funds in the FY23 budget.

Request from the Department of Corrections to extend the current agreement with Trinity Services Group, Inc. to provide inmate meals for FY23 at a cost of \$248,800. There are sufficient funds in the FY23 budget.

Terry Kokolis, Director of Corrections, added “Those who can't get out of jail are those with the greatest gravity of problems. If we can control the anger management of that group, then that is the biggest challenge that we have, along with co-occurring disorders and mental health disorders. And it really creates a scenario of failure for so many people. We're trying to impact it as best we can.”

Council Member Corey Pack stated, “I want to congratulate you, Terry, on your reappointment to the Commission on Correctional Standards. That's a big plus for Talbot County that they have you on that commission.”

Council Member Price reported that the legislation for correctional officers to join the Correctional Officers' Retirement System (CORS) didn't pass this year due to the late bill introduction. Ms. Price reported that she testified on the importance of the legislation with Senator Eckardt. Council member Pack offered to support the legislation next year when it is pre-filed, even though he will no longer be on the Council.

- 7) County Manager Stamp reported the Department of Corrections completed its correctional standards audit with the Maryland Commission on Correctional Standards and received a 100% rating with no recommendations. He congratulated Director Kokolis on this incredible achievement.
- 8) Mr. Stamp requested to Declare Tuesday, April 19, 2022, a Special Legislative Day to allow for the introduction of the FY23 Budget. The Council unanimously approved the designation of April 19<sup>th</sup> as a Special Legislative Day.

#### Announcements:

County Offices will be closed on Friday, April 15th in recognition of Good Friday.

April 10-16, 2022 is National Public Safety Telecommunicator's Week. Mr. Stamp stated, “We want to recognize the people who answer when you dial 9-1-1 and you're having a crisis. They remain calm and they make sure they get the right resources deployed in the right amount of time. They're often unsung heroes, but truth be known, none of the emergency response systems would work

without them. There would be no fire trucks, no ambulances, and no police cars without these incredibly professional and dedicated 9-1-1 operators that we have here at the Talbot Center. I just want to recognize them for the work that they do.”

Legislative Update: Laura Price reported that today was the 90<sup>th</sup> day of the Maryland Legislature. She highlighted two legislative victories for the counties in Maryland:

- SB 295 The EMS Emergency Medical Transport Bill allows for reimbursement, regardless of where the ambulance transports – to an urgent care center or treatment in the field. This bill means that those who have insurance will have the ability to bill the insurance for those ambulance rides.
- HB 1448 enables counties to enforce civil penalties at the local level. Talbot County initiated the bill which passed unanimously in the House and Senate.

Council member Price stated, “HB1448 is huge for something that we recognized here in Talbot County was a problem statewide. We took it to the state organization MACo, and through the help of our County Attorney Patrick Thomas, worked like crazy to get this bill through. I'm eternally grateful for Patrick's help on this bill.”

“Talbot County bringing forth this issue is having a huge statewide impact for all the other counties.”

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

The next Council meeting will be held in person on Tuesday, April 19 at 6:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room.

**Caption: Pictured is Greg Allis, Zoning and Floodplain Coordinator for Talbot County who presented information on April being Flood Awareness Month in Maryland.**

